

## MEMORANDUM

## NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

~~TOP SECRET/CODEWORD~~INFORMATION

August 16, 1973

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## MEMORANDUM FOR MR. KISSINGER

FROM: Jeanne W. Davis *JWD*

SUBJECT: Minutes of the WSAG Meeting of August 10, 1973

Attached are the minutes of the Washington Special Actions Group meeting held August 10, 1973, to discuss Cambodia and Thailand.

## Attachments:

Tab A - Colby briefing  
Tab B Draft cable

cc: Mr. Kennedy  
Mr. Eagleburger  
Mr. Stearman

OSD, JCS, DOS, NSC  
REVIEWS  
COMPLETED.

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Attached to S memo from Kennedy for HAK, 10 Aug. 1973

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Mr. Kissinger: (to Mr. Colby) May we have your briefing?

Mr. Kissinger: So they are not receiving heavy military equipment from the PRC or the USSR?

Mr. Colby: There is no evidence that they are.

Mr. Kissinger: You mean they are telling us the truth? That would be a major development. (to Adm. Moorer) In your minesweeping operation, isn't one of your mines going to blow up a ship some day?

Adm. Moorer: Probably -- it will probably be the dredge.

Mr. Kissinger: I would hate to think that our one perfect military operation is the deactivation of the mines.

Mr. Clements: I would stay off that dredge. That dredge sucks up sand off the bottom like a big elephant snout. It could suck up one of those mines and BOOM.

Mr. Kissinger: If the dredge sank wouldn't that block the harbor again?

Mr. Colby: If we ruin the dredge the entrance will silt over again.

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Adm. Moorer: (to Mr. Kissinger) If you want we could have those mines back in 12 hours.

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Adm. Moorer: We have counted 5,000 trucks up there. It looks like the Pentagon parking lot.

Mr. Colby: We estimate there might be as many as 23,000.

Mr. Clements: (to Mr. Kissinger) Do you want to go ahead with the U-2 or proceed in the usual way?

Mr. Kissinger: In the usual way, but it will only take one or two days, won't it? (to Mr. Porter) Do you agree? If so, let's go ahead and do it if there are no SAMs on the islands.

Mr. Porter: I don't see anything wrong with it.

Mr. Kissinger: Now may we look at what can be done about Cambodia. We have a draft cable here for (Ambassador) Graham Martin in reply to his requests. I understand the consensus is that we cannot replace SVN losses sustained in providing escort to Mekong River convoys. Martin points out that we owe the Vietnamese 29 fixed wing aircraft and 31 helicopters which they have lost and have not been replaced.

Mr. Porter: If they want to protect the Cambodian convoys they will have to do it on their own.

Adm. Moorer: We can't use MASF funds but we could use Cambodian MAP for replacements.

Mr. Kissinger: You can use Cambodian MAP to replace South Vietnamese equipment?

Mr. Aldrich: Only if Vietnam transfers the equipment to us and we then transfer it to Cambodia. Then we can replace it.

Mr. Clements: But those Cambodian MAP funds are tighter than hell.

Mr. Porter: Cambodian MAP is not unlimited.

Mr. Kennedy: We have a request in now to increase the amount by \$10 million.

Mr. Kissinger: Why have the Vietnamese not asked for replacement of those aircraft?

Mr. Hummel: We don't know why.

Mr. Kissinger: Do they understand that they can?

Mr. Carver: They are having their own problems with pilots and maintenance. Maybe they don't need them.

Mr. Stearman: Also, it would be expensive. It costs \$34 million to replace 60 aircraft.

Mr. Kennedy: Maybe they don't want to draw down their MASF.

Mr. Kissinger: As long as they understand they can.

Mr. Kennedy: The cable will refresh Martin's memory in this regard.

Mr. Kissinger: I have no trouble with the cable. Are there any objections?

Mr. Porter: We would like to add another paragraph at the end asking our people to give us their estimate as to the North Vietnamese reaction in Cambodia if South Vietnam gets into the act there. CIA does not think there will be a problem, but we would like to ask for an estimate.

Mr. Kissinger: I have no problem with that. I have no impression that Thieu is that eager to do this.

Mr. Porter: I think he will be reluctant in the light of the Congressional attitude.

Mr. Kissinger: I don't think this cable will trigger a Thieu decision to escort the convoys.

Adm. Moorer: My lawyer says we could replace the equipment with MASF if the Mekong is an international waterway.

Mr. Aldrich: But the point is that Vietnam would be assisting the Cambodians with supplies. That's a hard case to make.

Adm. Moorer: What else would you be going down the river with rice for?

Mr. Kissinger: You mean they can't help the Cambodians -- they can only sail around in the open sea?

Mr. Aldrich: That's Fulbright's proviso. We can't help South Vietnam give assistance to Cambodia.

Mr. Kissinger: This cable won't trigger convoy escort.

Mr. Clements: Thieu will be ultra-cautious.

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Adm. Moorer: We are taking the most conservative interpretation of the limitations.

Mr. Kissinger: Our overwhelming fear is that Congress may cut off all the funds. I would be willing to take a liberal interpretation otherwise.

Adm. Moorer: It would be a real blow in the belly if we lose overall funding.

Mr. Kissinger: That's the real worry -- not the legal interpretation.

Mr. Clements: If we skate on too thin ice we are asking for trouble.

Adm. Moorer: We would have to talk to the Congress about it. They are in such a genial mood these days.

Mr. Kissinger: (to Mr. Kennedy) Have they all seen our addition to the cable on escort?

Mr. Kennedy: We had a slight addition to paragraph 6 d.

Adm. Moorer: (Referring to the draft cable) These Swift boats only have 50 calibre machine guns and no armor. They could not defend themselves against shore batteries.

Mr. Carver: The Swifts carry a mortar.

Adm. Moorer: They have twin 50 calibre machine guns, a 181 mortar, no armor, a high silhouette, and an aluminum hull. Also, there are no river bases equipped to maintain them. They would be extremely vulnerable and MEDT does not recommend their use.

Mr. Kissinger: In the new draft concerning Congressional attitudes, we are merely saying what was in the original paragraph 7 only stronger. The worst problem is psychological. We only want to assure South Vietnam that we are still behind them.

Mr. Clements: I like the statement "we are not able to assure Thieu ... etc."

Adm. Moorer: The Swifts were only designed for coastal patrol -- to prevent the North Vietnamese from using small boats to get ashore.

Mr. Hummel: (Referring to the revised draft on Congressional attitudes) What would this do?

Mr. Kennedy: We would plan to send this as a separate telegram replying to Martin's paragraph 7. This is our proposed substitute for the draft sent over last night by Marshall Wright.

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Mr. Porter: This is better than the Wright draft.

Mr. Kissinger: (to Mr. Porter) Are you all right? This is an historic moment.

Mr. Hummel: Shall we send it out?

Mr. Porter: Yes, mark it cleared.

Mr. Kissinger: Has everyone seen the draft on training assistance for FANK using Thai facilities?

Mr. Clements: How can we do this within the limits of the funds available?

Adm. Moorer: Article 7 of the agreement prohibits the reintroduction of all foreign forces, according to paragraph 2 of this message. But trainees are not a force.

Mr. Kissinger: You could also argue that the Cambodians are not soldiers. I am beginning to see where we got the term "sea lawyer."

Mr. Aldrich: Article 7 says "military personnel."

Adm. Moorer: Are they military personnel?

Mr. Porter: They would have to be, whether they can fight or not.

Adm. Moorer: This telegram says "foreign forces."

Mr. Kissinger: As one of the drafters of Article 7, your argument would be hard to justify. Of course, if massive violations continue, I don't know how strictly we should observe Article 7. But I am not sure now is the time to try it. I am primarily concerned that we don't pull out American forces too fast. (to Adm. Moorer) Under your argument we could put in 50,000 Americans and say they are trainees. We may come to that point if the violations are too severe. Are any Cambodians being trained in South Vietnam now?

Mr. Forman: No.

Mr. Kissinger: (to Mr. Clements) You say we can't use Thai facilities for financial reasons? Don't we have enough funds?

Mr. Clements: We will run damn short of money.

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Mr. Kissinger: We either have to use South Vietnam or Thailand. South Vietnam is illegal and Thailand is impossible. Which would you choose?

Adm. Moorer: The illegal.

Mr. Kissinger: The illegal we do immediately; the unconstitutional takes a little longer. That's a joke, you understand. How much money will it take -- let's get an estimate.

Mr. Kennedy: There is a CINCPAC conference on Monday that will be looking into this.

Mr. Kissinger: Let him proceed - let the message go.

Mr. Kennedy: We have made a few non-substantive changes which we will take up separately with everyone.

Mr. Porter: That's okay.

Mr. Kissinger: With the few changes which everyone will see. How about the resupply procedure outlined in the State cable? Can we live with that with the Congress?

Mr. Aldrich: Legally there is no problem. But to the greater extent you do it, the more attention it will attract in Congress. They will see it as a way to get around their limitations.

Mr. Kissinger: Our hearts are pure and our conscience is clear.

Adm. Moorer: And they're out of town.

Mr. Forman: We intend to send an implementing message giving some additional guidance.

Mr. Kissinger: What quantities are you talking about?

Mr. Kennedy: They can't be large except in those situations where the Cambodians get close to the Vietnam border. Or if they supply South Vietnam boats on the river or get the boats themselves. They are actually doing it now.

Mr. Kissinger: So we are talking about very small amounts. Can we defend this with the Congress?

Mr. Clements: It will fall out about as you would expect. Some of them, like Mahon, will say okay; others will raise hell.

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Mr. Kissinger: Won't we have some idea in a month what the situation in Cambodia will be even if it should drag on for a while?

Mr. Colby: Yes, we will have an indication.

Mr. Kissinger: What about pilots for Cambodia?

Mr. Kennedy: We just received another message on the LDX (attached at Tab B).

Mr. Porter: We have been through DOD on this.

Mr. Clements: It has not come to me yet.

Adm. Moorer: This last sentence -- Fulbright asked me about this -- who funds it? That's where you will get an argument. How can we separate this from MAP? Fulbright would argue that if Cambodia can pay for this then they can cut MAP.

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Mr. Porter: Who funds them? Could it come from Khmer funds? They have some cash of their own if they care to use it.

Mr. Hummel: There are international contributions to FEOF. The whole thing is fungible and we are the main contributors.

Mr. Carver: They could not prove that any given dollar came from us.

Adm. Moorer: The problem is to prove that it didn't.

Mr. Clements: We could provide a cover -- that would be relatively simple.

Mr. Kissinger: What, the White House ordered it?

Mr. Clements: If the funds are co-mingled, okay, if it would be that much help.

Mr. Kennedy: It would provide pilots in the interim period while we train Cambodians.

Mr. Kissinger: The critical period will be for the next few weeks. It is partly a psychological problem.

Mr. Stearman: Also, they have planes that can't fly if they have no pilots.

Mr. Kissinger: (to Mr. Hummel) You handle it. That's all for today except for the daily injunction to the Embassy that we don't get awards for losing in a low profile. Who is talking with the Cambodians these days?

Adm. Moorer: Johnny Vogt has been like a bulldog. He hasn't quit a second. Highways 4 and 5 and the Mekong are all open now. The rice and oil situation is pretty good.

Mr. Kissinger: It may fall apart next week.

Adm. Moorer: They have cleared up the West Bank. Now they are working on the area between the Mekong and Bassac Rivers. When the bombing stops the Cambodians will be in pretty good shape.

Mr. Kissinger: They must be made to understand that we will do the best we can for them under the Congressional restrictions.

Adm. Moorer: The insurgents are being chopped to ribbons -- four to five hundred a day. The government is moving out to defend the airfield. The situation today is far better than it was four weeks ago.

Mr. Kissinger: It is hard to tell whether this is because of what we did or because the other side is pulling back.

Mr. Colby: It is partly our bombing and partly the other side catching its breath.

Adm. Moorer: But as of the 15th the pressure on Phnom Penh had decreased and the other side was moving away.

Mr. Kissinger: Let's get that word out through the PIO's.

Adm. Moorer: If they come back in, it will be clear that it was the lack of bombing that made it possible.

Mr. Kissinger: Most people don't understand how much things have improved. Let's get out some of the details to the public no later than Monday.

Mr. Hummel: Murray Marder is printing some pieces on Sunday and has been talking to me about them. I will try to get this in.

Mr. Kissinger: If he uses that I would like to see it! (to Mr. Hummel) If you are in touch with him, get this to him.

Mr. Hummel: I won't be responsible for any part of the story that doesn't come out right. (to Mr. Kissinger) It would be better if you could get it to Marder.

Mr. Kissinger: (to Mr. Hummel) I know Marder and I understand your position. If he calls me I will do it, but since he has already been in touch with you, it would be better for you to do it.

On Thailand, I am not sure (Ambassador) Unger understands our strategy. It isn't his job to pull out as many U. S. troops as possible.

His job is to tell the Thais we intend to stay -- without any nudging or any winking. Lee Kuan Yew told me that the Thais think we plan to bug out. Can we convey this strategy to Unger?

Mr. Porter: We can, but I don't think he is under any misunderstanding.

Mr. Kissinger: We will pull out what troops are needed to protect the Thai government's position. Are the Thais trying to be good boys and telling us that they will let go a large number of American troops because they think that's what we want?

Adm. Moorer: I don't think so.

Mr. Hummel: We have a telegram just in from Unger that answers your question. (Handed message to Mr. Kissinger.)

Mr. Porter: They are just trying to get into a palaver with us.

Mr. Hummel: We haven't told him a damned thing. We need to get out that telegram that has been kicking around between State and Defense.

Mr. Clements: We signed off today.

Mr. Kissinger: Don't the Thais first want some assurance of our continued interest? Have they had that in a clear-cut way?

Mr. Porter: Yes, we have made that unmistakably clear.

Mr. Kissinger: (referring to Unger cable) Why must the announcement be made by August 20? I wonder about the strategy in this sense. I agree we should withdraw -- we have too many forces there. But with the bombing halt on August 15, and the announcement of our withdrawal five days later, I am not sure this is the right signal.

Mr. Porter: There is no problem with telling Unger to go back in and say that this timing is not in our interest.

Mr. Kissinger: It isn't in their interest. (to Mr. Colby) What do you think?

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Mr. Colby: The idea of the bug-out philosophy is the main problem.

Mr. Kissinger: Put it to the Thais that way. We remain committed to them. There will be no bug-out in Southeast Asia. We will do what is necessary. However, we recognize their domestic problem. Will a withdrawal help them or will it contribute to the bug-out philosophy?

Mr. Porter: All they want to say is that they are working with the U.S. on the problem.

Mr. Kissinger: Tell them what the problem is.

Mr. Hummel: Now the Thais want to talk specifics.

Mr. Kissinger: What do they want?

Mr. Hummel: To satisfy their domestic situation by saying that they are in direct, continuous touch with the U.S. They are asking what we really have in mind.

Mr. Kissinger: What do they want? Our judgment depends on whether they want us in or out. We can give them any figure. The figure is less important than the trends. Their question must be are we getting ready to jettison them or are we staying.

Adm. Moorer: We had augmented by 11,000 from the agreed number. Maybe we can talk first about the augmentation. We could take 3500 men out, then reexamine the situation as we are coming down to a permanent figure.

Mr. Kissinger: My information indicates that Thailand is in a shaky situation. Just to discuss numbers does not satisfy their problem. Our people out there have always wanted to get our troops out.

Mr. Clements: The State people have always wanted to get ahead of the Thais.

Mr. Kissinger: The Thai problem is to prove to their domestic opposition that they are not keeping any more Americans there than absolutely necessary. That is easy to meet.

Mr. Porter: Also, they want equipment for their army.

Mr. Clements: You mean they want us to leave our equipment?

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Mr. Porter: Yes.

Mr. Kissinger: Can we?

Adm. Moorer: We don't have much there now.

Mr. Porter: They have seen what happened in Korea.

Mr. Colby: The Thais are concerned about the Americans walking in one day and saying we have decided to pull out 10,000 men. They worry that they would have no part in determining that figure. But they want something -- they are asking us for a negotiating figure.

Mr. Hummel: They want an initial draw-down for domestic purposes. But they want some evidence that they are participating in the control of the troop level -- that this is not a unilateral U.S. decision. We have done all we can in giving them these anodyne, general assurances. The Thai now want to get specific, particularly about Nam Phong.

Mr. Kissinger: (referring to Unger telegram) He says we will stand by our friends and our treaty commitments. The way things are going now, this could be from Diego Garcia or some base in Cyprus. That's really what concerns the Thais.

Mr. Porter: What basically concerns them is hardware.

Mr. Carver: Whatever the facts, if the August 15 bombing halt is followed by a thinning out of U.S. forces in Thailand they will be causally related.

Mr. Kissinger: We will agree with a figure if we can get Unger to give them the philosophy to go with it. August 20 is not a good day unless they plead for it. The most important thing is to convince the Thais that we are prepared to keep significant forces there, with the size of these forces to be mutually determined. However, we recognize their domestic needs, and are prepared to withdraw X number of troops.

Mr. Hummel: That's what the telegram says -- it meets your need.

Mr. Kissinger: No, it doesn't; it does not give the philosophy. It just says we will pull out. What they have on their minds is what if, after August 15, we come and say we are pulling out 25,000 men. We are prepared to withdraw to meet their domestic concerns and also to conform to our post-Indochina needs. The level of withdrawal will be determined in consultation. Our estimate is that we would withdraw X numbers fairly quickly. If that is okay, fine; if they want it higher, let us know. Put the monkey on their back. But at this moment, Unger must not panic them.

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Mr. Hummel: I am sorry you are addressing this in vacuo. There are three other telegrams of background on this.

Mr. Kissinger: We can't assume any figure.

Mr. Hummel: Unger has already given the Thais the philosophy. This is the last piece.

Mr. Kissinger: Maybe I am too impressed by Lee Kuan Yew, but he convinced me that the Thais are on the verge of panic.

Mr. Porter: That's saying too much.

Mr. Kissinger: Why did he do it?

Mr. Porter: The Thais put him up to it.

Mr. Kissinger: If I were a Thai, looking at what the U.S. has done in Indochina, I would sure as hell be wondering when the axe will fall.

Mr. Clements: If Unger has said "we will not force reductions on the Thais" that's Henry's point.

Mr. Kissinger: Let's repeat it to him. If we pull troops out, the Congressional committees will be happy for a week. If things go wrong, we will get the blame anyhow.

Mr. Hummel: One additional point: our air units in Thailand no longer have any legal function after August 15. There is no reason for having them there.

Mr. Kissinger: Unless we decide to go back to the Congress for authorization to extend the bombing.

Mr. Hummel: (to Mr. Kissinger) You are talking about its being a wrong signal to withdraw, but the signal has already been given by the Congress.

Adm. Moorer: We would have a hard time even to get started by August 20. We need a week to get them alerted so they can start getting their things together.

Mr. Kissinger: If we can get a cable of instruction out with some philosophy and some numbers in it, I have no doubt that Unger will carry it out expeditiously.

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